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Research Memorandum

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TO : The Acting Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : DNR - Roger Wilsman

SUBJECT: Khrushchev's December 12 Speech Reflects Soviet Post-Cuba Intentions

Khrushchev's elaborate defense on December 12 of his Cuban policy — that it was a triumph for the policy of peaceful coexistence in which Cuba was spared from attack by the US and the forces of peace showed themselves stronger than the forces of war — affords some indications of Soviet intentions with respect to Cuba itself, relations with Communist China, and negotiations with the West on Berlin.

Business in Cuba To Continue

Khrushchev evidently intends to maintain an extensive Soviet presence in Cuba. The bulk of his fulsome rhetoric about Cuba was devoted to reassuring the Cubans of continued Soviet protection and assistance. However, by implication, at least, he suggested that the Soviet involvement in Cuba was not without limits.

Cuba was not accorded the status of full membership in the communist bloc. The speech gave no details about Soviet economic aid to Cuba. Khrushchev also remained silent about the extent of Soviet military presence now in Cuba. Silence on the latter point may have been intended: first, to avoid arousing popular misgivings in the USSR; second, to obscure the facts and thus minimize US ability to mount pressure for a withdrawal of the Soviet forces (his statement that the personnel associated with the missiles left with them suggested that he hoped to avoid further negotiations on the subject of Soviet military personnel in Cuba); and, third, to avoid having to publicize another retreat from Cuba in the event the US forces their withdrawal.

In the New York negotiations, Khrushchev appears to be prepared for either an agreed settlement or a stalemate. He expressed a preference for a negotiated agreement, but he also readied a fallback position for use in case of stalemate by stating that the US promise not to invade Cuba was already given and threatening — albeit vaguely — to take counteraction if the US did not live up to its pledge.

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Inter-Bloc Polemics Sparked

In response to Chinese Communist charges of a new Munich, Khrushchev's apologia for his Cuban policy took the form of the sharpest Soviet public attack on the Chinese Communists to date. Khrushchev in effect announced that he would pursue his own policies -- not only in negotiations with the West, but even including a possible ideological rapprochement as well as diplomatic alignment with Yugoslavia -- despite Chinese objections. He publicly affronted the Chinese on a series of issues -- their espousal of recklessness in dealing with the West, their reluctance to take Hong Kong or Macao, their support for Albania, and by implication their responsibility for initiating Sino-Indian border war. Peking will almost certainly have to reply in kind.

Each side in the Sino-Soviet dispute has now in effect challenged the other to initiate an open break; it remains to be seen whether either will take the step. Even if -- as appears likely -- both still wish to avoid it, there is still the question of whether the mounting momentum of an increasingly strident debate may not force the issue.

Relations with the West

Khrushchev showed himself to be apprehensive about an assertive policy on the part of the West. He apparently sought to impress on the West that the USSR had not acted out of weakness in the Cuban crisis and that it could not be forced to make concessions in the wake of it.

He also indicated that he was eager to engage the West, and particularly the US, in negotiations. Khrushchev's use of the familiar Soviet argument equating the views of the extreme left with those of the extreme right on the issue of war was more than just a polemic against the Chinese Communists; it was also meant to convey the suggestion that Khrushchev and certain Western leaders occupy a reasonable middle ground and could reach an accommodation.

Berlin Position Shifted

The only subject for East-West negotiations on which Khrushchev indicated a significant shift in the Soviet position was Berlin. His remarks on disarmament were routine.

he argued that troops in Berlin should be stationed there for a limited period of time under a UN flag. He then shifted from arguing that Western troops would have to be removed to advocating a change in the status of the troops. Khrushchev did not give any indication of the composition he envisaged for UN forces; probably he foresees their being the US, British and French troops presently in Berlin, but now that he has hinted at that outcome he apparently wishes to keep the issue of composition of the UN force as a subject for further bargaining.

In modifying his stand on the question of troop contingents, Khrushchev appears to be aiming at an interim agreement which will allow the West to retain its presence in West Berlin in return for accepting a change in the legal basis for that presence, and which will permit the USSR to return to the question of Berlin at a more propitious time and in a more favorable UN forum.